

Message From the Associate Commissioner

Census 2000—the 22nd decennial census—will take place on April 1. Two articles in this issue focus on issues raised by the upcoming census.

This year's census inaugurates a new way of classifying people by race and ethnicity. In addition to facing revised racial and ethnic categories, respondents will be able to identify themselves with more than one racial group. Like other federal agencies, the Social Security Administration (SSA) will be required to adopt this new approach. "Identifying the Race or Ethnicity of SSI Recipients," by Charles G. Scott, examines the ways that Social Security has recorded the race and ethnicity of SSI beneficiaries in the past and identifies issues for the future.

Disability, like race, is a concept that is fraught with difficulties. Census 2000 also employs a new set of questions to identify persons with disabilities. "Collecting Information on Disability in the 2000 Census," by Michele Adler and colleagues, describes how these questions were developed—a process in which SSA staff was actively involved.

This issue of the *Bulletin* also includes the summary and introduction to the report of the 1999 Technical Panel on Assumptions and Methods to the Social Security Advisory Board. The panel, chaired by Eugene C. Steuerle, makes several significant recommendations concerning Social Security's research and analytical activities. For example, it endorses SSA's ongoing efforts to use microsimulation models to project future incomes under current law and assess the distributional effects of proposed alternatives. (The opening article in this issue presents further results from SSA's MINT model.) The panel also recommends that SSA develop a capability to illustrate the macroeconomic effects of alternative policies, particularly on saving, labor supply, and the federal budget. Many of these recommendations were already reflected in the Office of Policy's policy and research agenda. You can find the panel's complete report on the web at <<http://www.ssab.gov>>.

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